



## Minutes

### **Community Meeting: North Albany Park Natural Area**

**June 7, 2016, 6:00 - 7:30 pm**

### **North Albany County Park Shelter**

*This meeting was held as scheduled on June 7, 2016 at 6:00pm at North Albany Park. The meeting was publicized through a direct post mail to all residences within 300ft of the proposed project, on the Benton County website, and two notices (8 ½"x11") were posted within the park. The meeting was attended by 51 neighbors. Most of the questions/concerns that came up at the meeting can be found in the Question & Answer section of the minutes. The timeline for the proposed Natural Area development and the North Albany Park Master Plan are also within, and will ultimately address the concerns/issues or problems that the community has brought to us (the applicant).*

**Light Dinner** – Community members networked and communicated with neighbors over dinner.

### **Welcome, Introductions & Background**

*Jeff Powers, Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Director*

Through discussions and previous public meetings, the community and the former land owner of the donated Natural Area requested that the 10.5 acre parcel to stay as is; although, a loop trail through the parcel was also discussed in order to increase connectivity and provide physical activity opportunities. In addition, the Benton County Natural Areas & Parks Department realizes that the facilities in the North Albany Park are old and that it is time for a Master Plan process to see what changes, if any, are desired by the community. The North Albany community is an important part of this process, and your input will be very useful. This first meeting sets the stage for additional community input opportunities regarding the North Albany Park. Benton County Natural Areas & Parks has invited the Benton County Health Department to collaborate as we are taking a Health in All Policies approach to this process.

*Sara Hartstein, Benton County Health Policy Specialist*

The Benton County Health Department's role in this process is to assist with community outreach and engagement. Our Healthy Communities team takes a Health in All Policies approach because we believe that all policies, and the environment we live in, have an impact on our health. We recognize that having access to parks and natural areas increases opportunities for physical activity in the community, and being in nature has proven benefits on our mental health.

### **Concept Plan & Timeline – The Natural Area**

*Lisa de Graaf, Benton County Park Operations Coordinator*

This community meeting is to discuss the 10.5 acres that was donated by the developer, now known as the North Albany Park Natural Area. We are required to hold a meeting by the City of Albany as part of our Site Plan Review permit. Conceptually, the new parcel will include a half mile dirt loop trail, armored in rock where needed. Only a trail and two informational/wayfinding kiosks are currently planned; nothing else like parking or restrooms are

being proposed. The proposed trail would be cut 8' feet wide, with a 4' tread and we do not intend to light the trail. We have considered possibly have a path around the perimeter of the existing Park later on. The connectivity will improve biking and walking in the area, especially with new bike paths on roads near the park. Bikes will be allowed on the trail as well. Timeline has slightly changed since we did not get the grant we applied for last winter; however, a new grant cycle is coming up this fall and we will apply again. The schedule as of right now is on track (see timeline below). We will keep any negative impacts to the community at a minimum during this process.

#### Natural Area Timeline:

May 3, 2016 - Benton County acquires the Natural Area

June 7, 2016 - Community meeting for residents that live within 300 feet of the Natural Area and Park

By end of August, 2016 - Benton County obtains Site Permit for the Natural Area from the City of Albany

Fall 2016 – A grant opportunity will be available to help fund the development of the proposed trail

February, 2016 - Invasive Species Mitigation

Spring 2017 - Equipment on the ground to begin trail development

August/September, 2017 - Open trail in the Natural Area

### **Hazard Tree Mitigation Plan**

*Adam Stebbins, Benton County Natural Resource Coordinator*

We are having a lot of die off of Douglas fir trees in/around the park. Other trees such as Oregon White Oak, Ash and Willamette Pine are in high quality condition.

- Reasons for Douglas fir die off include:
  - Three years of drought.
  - Storm water and water runoff from city development leading to saturation/drainage issues.
  - Many of the Douglas Fir hazard trees that have been identified, show signs of the Ips Beetle damage.
- At the end of the summer/early fall, before ground surface is too wet, selective tree falling will occur.
- If removal of hazard trees does not occur, increased pests will likely occur.
- All logging and cleanup work will be done as quick and efficiently as possible.
- There are around approximately 116 total hazard trees within the Natural Area and current Park combined. Around 50% in each area.

See presentation poster/slides for more details.

The following are community member questions regarding the hazard tree mitigation plan:

*Why were the trees cut down behind Hillcrest? We thought those were going to stay a part of the Natural Area.* There has been a lot of confusion about this particular area of the map. The land behind Hillcrest is still owned by the developer and trees were cut down for the subdivision. The rest of the Natural Area will remain.

*What is the fire plan for the area?* Benton County follows local regulations.

*Can there be recommendations around tree management?* Yes, input is recommended. Please contact Adam Stebbins at [adam.stebbins@co.benton.or.us](mailto:adam.stebbins@co.benton.or.us).

*When planting small trees, will they be taken care of? Some small trees last year weren't watered and the community took care of them.* Yes, Benton County plans to take care of the new trees that are planted. There may also be volunteer opportunities to assist with care of the new trees.

*What do the blue stripes mean around the trees in the Park?* Trees with blue rings are the ones to be cut down.

*When you cut the trees down, do you plan to remove the stumps?* Yes, stumps will be ground down to a height so that Benton County can mow over them. The plan is for Park to be closed for no more than five working days for tree removal.

*Why are we not growing more Willamette oak trees?* We will look into planting that type of tree when we start working on our replanting plan.

## **Master Plan Process – North Albany Park**

*Lisa de Graaf, Benton County Park Operations Coordinator*

We started with stakeholder interviews in April with community members from North Albany to talk about what they see as the future of this park and the best ways to engage North Albany residents. Data will include the outcome from those discussions as well as other data gathering tools and community meetings. They include surveys in the park, a park audit and observation, and an online survey. Draft options/concepts for the Park will be developed by fall, presented to the community for feedback, updated with community input, and then presented to the community again. The final draft will be ready by the end of year. We welcome all ideas and we will listen to all possibilities.

### Master Plan Timeline:

April – May, 2016 – Stakeholder Interviews

June – September, 2016 – Community outreach and engagement

August – September, 2016 – Develop Concept Plan/Options

September, 2016 – Gather community feedback on Concept Plan/Options

September/October, 2016 – Use community feedback to update Concept Plan/Options

September/October, 2016 – First Final Draft of the Master Plan

December, 2016 – End of Master Plan Process

*Sara Hartstein, Benton County Health Policy Specialist*

The stakeholders we talked with were already somehow engaged with the Park; if we did not interview you, it does not mean that we do not want to hear from you. Here is how you can provide your input and stay involved with this process:

- 1) Stay updated
  - Sign up to be included on the listserv for updates and future opportunities to participate in the Master Plan process.
- 2) Tell us what you think
  - Participate in the survey. There are paper surveys available here this evening, or you may take a survey link card home to participate online.
- 3) Promote the process and opportunities for involvement.

- Share with your friends, neighbors and other networks.
  - Invite us to come to you! We will attend your church groups, block parties, neighborhood association meetings, etc. to provide you with updates and/or gather your input.
  - Benton County will be providing updates on the process at the North Albany Neighborhood Association potluck on Tuesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> at the North Albany Park Shelter. You are all invited!
- 4) Volunteer
- We will be conducting park observations in the park this summer to determine the characteristics of the park that help or hinder physical activity. If you are interested in participating, we are hosting training on proper data collection methods on Monday, June 13 from 1:00 to 2:30 pm at the North Albany Park Shelter.
  - Join the Friends of North Albany Park & Natural Areas group to learn about opportunities to volunteer in the Park & Natural Area (e.g., pulling weeds, watering new trees, trail development, etc.)

## Questions & Answers

*Will you use herbicides in the Natural Area for invasive species mitigation? We have bees in the area that we are worried about. We use a mixture of mechanical use (weed eaters, pruners), volunteers, and some herbicides for most obnoxious weeds. Notifications will be sent out when they are being used.*

*What is the location of the proposed path in location to existing property? The proposed path will loop mostly around perimeter, separated by about 200 feet before properties.*

*Would the proposed new trail be open dawn to dusk? Yes, all of our parks are open dawn to dusk. We do not plan to physically close the trail, but if we get reports of people lingering around at night time, that is not acceptable.*

*What are you doing to make sure the Park is safe? We will be working with the City of Albany to conduct a Crime Prevention through Environmental Design Evaluation of the Park. We will use this information to inform the concepts/options in the Master Plan.*

*What is the cost benefit on keeping the Natural Area as is vs. putting in a trail? If the proposed trail moves forward, ideally the cost will be funded by grant instead of tax dollars. Tax dollars will manage the Natural Area whether there is a trail or it remains in its natural state.*

*There is a maintenance area pad on the Natural Area map. What will it look like? The pad on the map is proposed for a park maintenance truck to park on the property; it will not be lighted. It will also have some kind of locked barrier when not in use.*

*Are there any plans for improving Hillcrest? This isn't a very good road and if access is improved it will see more wear and tear from the increased traffic. We look forward to hearing your ideas about that area of the park.*